
CASE STUDY

INFECTION PREVENTION AND CONTROL: IT'S IN YOUR HANDS



Pat, a registered nurse, is working a 12-hour night shift on the orthopedic unit where she has worked for the past 20 years. She knows that hand hygiene is the most effective way of preventing the transmission of health care-associated infections to patients, staff, and visitors in all health-care settings.

Mrs. Johnson, who is 80 years old, was admitted to the unit today at 10 a.m. is waiting for surgery for a fractured hip and has been fasting since her arrival. Pat is caring for Mrs. Johnson on the night shift. The OR called at 9 p.m. to reschedule Mrs. Johnson's surgery for tomorrow.

In preparation for surgery tomorrow and as per physician's orders, Mrs. Johnson will need to begin fasting at midnight. Pat goes to Mrs. Johnson's room to offer her something to eat. Mrs. Johnson requests a sandwich, or toast with peanut butter and jam.

Pat uses the alcohol-based hand rub from the dispenser located by the door as she leaves the patient room and proceeds to the patient kitchen to prepare Mrs. Johnson's food. Located by the door in the patient kitchen is an alcohol-based hand rub dispenser as well as a sink and hand soap dispenser by the fridge. Taped to the fridge is the poster describing the four moments of hand hygiene. Above the sink is a poster on how to wash your hands.

AS PAT HAS JUST CLEANED HER HANDS WHEN SHE LEFT THE PATIENT ROOM, DOES SHE NEED TO PERFORM HAND HYGIENE AGAIN?

Hand hygiene is performed in accordance with the four moments of hand hygiene.

- Before contact with a patient or patient's environment (e.g. donning personal protective equipment (PPE), entering an examination room, providing patient care).
 - Before a clean or aseptic procedure (e.g. wound care, handling intravenous devices, handling food, preparing medications).
 - After exposure or risk of exposure to blood and/or body fluids (e.g. hands visibly soiled, after removal of gloves).
 - After contact with a patient or patient's environment (e.g. doffing PPE, leaving examination room, after handling patient care equipment).
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WHEN PAT PERFORMS HAND HYGIENE IN THE PATIENT KITCHEN PRIOR TO PREPARING/HANDLING MRS. JOHNSON'S SNACK, WHAT IS THE APPROPRIATE PRODUCT TO USE IN THIS SITUATION?

Appropriate products are selected and used for hand hygiene. Alcohol-based hand rubs (ABHRs) containing 60-90 per cent alcohol are used for performing hand hygiene, except in the following situations where soap and water are required:

- during food preparation
- when hands are visibly soiled with food, dirt, blood, body fluids and/or a buildup of ABHR
- following glove removal when providing care for patients with diarrhea and/or vomiting

In this situation, it would be appropriate for Pat to use soap and water as she is in the process of preparing food for Mrs. Johnson.

Thank you to the [College & Association of Registered Nurses of Alberta](#) for granting permission to adapt their case study.

RESSOURCES

[Hand Hygiene Practices in Healthcare Settings](#) (GC)

[Hand Hygiene for Patient and Provider Safety in Canada](#) (CPSI)

[Fact Sheet Infection Prevention and Control](#) (NANB)